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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE DISTR. 13 July 1954

SUBJECT The Rybachye-Przhevalsk Railway/Tadzhikistan's
Road Network/Kazakhstan-Chinese Sinkiang
Transportation Links

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1. The planned railway extension from Rybachye to Przhevalsk has only economic significance. It would serve to take lumber out from the area around Lake Issyk-Kul, where the "Tyan Shanskaya" fir grows. These are the only forests in Central Asia. In 1939, construction was begun on a railway line from Frunze. By 1941, the line had progressed only about 60 kms to an electric power station and irrigation canal near the town of Taksak. The power station needed materials which the railway was able to bring. During 1941, the line reached Bistrovka. It was extended to Rybachye in 1947. The above route had been included in the original plan. Subsequently, Soviet publications stated that construction on a railway extension to Przhevalsk was begun in 1947 and that the line would follow the north shore of Lake Issyk-Kul. if this stretch has been completed. It is not too important as the lake can be used to transport lumber to Rybachye. The line is of local significance (mestnoye znachenie), single track, and broad gauge.
2. The Stalinabad-Kurgan Tyube-Mizhni Pyandzh railway line is definitely narrow gauge and single track. It is even less than "of local significance". It is used to transport cotton. It may be able to handle the equivalent of five average railway freight cars.

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3. In regard to the road network of the Tadzhik SSR, the main road is the Tashkent-Stalinabad highway. It is a "government" road, ie, considered of significance for all the USSR. The Stalinabad-Khorog road is of "Republican" significance. It follows the north bank of the Panj River (called the Amu Darya further to the west). It is a dirt road, although certain stretches have a hard surface merely because the road winds along rocky cliffs. It is four and one-half meters wide, ie, one way. There is very little traffic on the road. It is closed by snow from November to March. Administrative reasons were the main cause for building the road, as prior to that time Khorog was not directly connected with Stalinabad, capital of the Tadzhik SSR. Khorog is the capital of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (the Pamir mountain area, known as the Rim of the World), which is part of Tadzhikistan. The road also has some strategic significance, because there are airfields and radar stations near Khorog.
4. A larger and older road ran from Osh south to Khorog. It was a "government" road and had a strategic significance because of its proximity to China and Tibet. It was surfaced with gravel south to "Alaiskaya Dalina" (Alai Valley). The road was two lane for almost its entire length. At such points as Ak-Baital Pass, 4700 meters high, it was closed by snow during the winter. Therefore, the road south of the pass was closed from November to April. The southern section is mostly dirt. There was little traffic. Only 3000 people lived in Khorog and there were very few vehicles.
5. The road from Samarkand to Stalinabad was also a "government" route. Its exact route was Samarkand-through the canyon of Ak Kapchigai-Denau-Yurchi-Stalinabad. It was open all year, except that it was impassable for five or six weeks during the winter because of rains. There was only local traffic. It was mostly a dirt road, although a few stretches were surfaced with gravel. It was from six and one-half to seven meters wide, ie, a two lane road.
6. In regard to any plans to link Kazakhstan or Kirghizia with Chinese Sinkiang by rail and motor road, there were no plans as of 1941 to connect the areas in question by railway, as at that time there were no railways in that part of China. I read in the Soviet press recently, however, that two rail lines were being built. The southern line was to be from Sary-Uzek in Kazakhstan and was to follow a route along the northern foothills which are a continuation of the Tien Shan mountain range to Urumchi. The northern line was to run from Ayaguz in Kazakhstan through Chuguchak and along the southern edge of the Altai mountains.
7. In regard to motor roads linking the areas in question, there was the "government" route from Ayaguz through Bakhty to Chuguchak in Sinkiang. Ayaguz is a station on the TurkSib Railway. The length of the road on the Soviet side of the border was 202 kms. The road was begun in 1932 and completed in 1934. It was a very good uniform road, nine meters wide (two lane), and surfaced with gravel all the way. It was open all year. Two hundred trucks owned by the Soviet Government were used on the road to bring out Sinkiang hides and cotton. The road had been constructed to facilitate Soviet control of Sinkiang and to permit the bringing out of Sinkiang products. The USSR had regained control of Sinkiang by about 1934 in a military campaign which utilized disguised Soviet troops. The Soviets then used Chinese from Harbin who were undercover Communists to rule Sinkiang for the USSR. Imagine that Peiping now controls Sinkiang.

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8. Another "government" motor road connecting Kazakhstan with Sinkiang was begun in 1934 and completed in about 1936. It ran from Sary-Uzek (another station on the TurkSib Railway) through Dzharzhat (now called Panfilov) to Kuldja in Sinkiang. It was a gravel-surfaced, all weather, nine meter wide (two lane) road. The section of this road, as well as of the road mentioned in the preceding paragraph, which was in Sinkiang was built by the Chinese. Truck transport was also used on this route, but there were only 80 trucks.
9. A third road branched off at the Taldyk pass from the Osh-Khorog road in Kirghizia. It branched off about 180 km south of Osh, after Gulcha, to Irkeshtam in Kirghizia and then went on to Kashgar in Kashgaria (China). The map in the Atlas shows Kashgaria as part of Sinkiang. The Soviet authorities on the other hand referred to Kashgaria separately. The map used in this case was "Soviet Union of Russia", pp 62-63, John Bartholomew's Advanced Atlas of Modern Geography, 1950 edition. The road was a "Republican" route and not too important. It was rather a difficult route and there was not too much agricultural activity in the area through which it passed. There was little traffic. For most of its length it was a dirt road, although there were some sections surfaced with gravel. It was an all weather, two lane road.

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